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Lebanon: Political Requirements for National Reconciliation

It is very unlikely that the GOL can move towards creating a true government of National Unity (GNU).

- The forces of confessionalism have been growing consistently over the last nine months with no perceptible movement in the opposite direction. The Muslims sense they finally have the Maronites on the ropes.
- Israel has clearly decided that a GNU is not in the cards and has been busy striking its own bilateral relationships with each of the confessional groups to secure, at the least, Israel's own interests.
- The LAF, although it has done better than many would have guessed, still faces severe problems of maintaining its unity in confessional warfare. It was not intended to impose itself upon anybody, but only to serve as a buffer among consenting forces. It cannot stand the pressures of imposing itself on other factions.
- The LAF has already been compromised -- probably unfairly -- in the eyes of the Druze in fighting alongside the Phalange to hold the Shuf. Again, it was not designed to do this. Similarly it is compromised in west and south Beirut where it is seen to have been used as an anti-Shia instrument. The LAF is now regarded by most as an instrument of the Phalange.
- The Christians are distraught at their setback in the Shuf and are moving more and more in their minds towards a Maronite mini-state around Beirut and the Christian heartland.
- Gemayel himself is now trapped between these forces. He is perceived as attempting to impose the LAF on other confessional groups who resist him as a Phalangist at heart while the Phalange reviles him for talking of compromise and not pursuing the rock-bottom interest of the Phalange. Gemayel probably cannot long survive in this situation. The Israelis will be among the first to cheer his departure.
- The Syrians have now won in the Shuf and are in a position to dictate terms of settlement to Gemayel. He has the choice of accommodating to Syrian interests or continuing the military struggle with waning resources.

Syria itself seeks to bring about a GNU on its terms. Right now it has the support of a significant grouping of the population (Druze, Sunni, Shia, some Christians) and can make the claim of national unity far more readily than Gemayel. National unity may come under Syrian terms and in the form of a Syrian protectorate.

No Arab allies have the stomach for reversing Syria in Lebanon. The Saudis in particular will not support a US/LAF backed assault against Syria in Lebanon and view accommodation with Assad as the only way out.

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